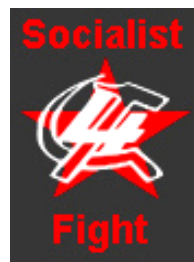




In Defence of Trotskyism No. 15

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Revolutionary Communism: Lenin and Trotsky or Stalin and Mao? Part 2 June 2015



The general historic role of the Stalinist bureaucracy and their Comintern is counter-revolutionary. But through their military and other interests they can be forced to support progressive movements. Even Ludendorff felt himself forced to give Lenin a train – a very progressive action – and Lenin accepted. We must keep our eyes open to discern the progressive acts of the Stalinists, support them independently, foresee in time the danger, the betrayals, warn the masses and gain their confidence. Trotsky, *Writings, Letter on India, 1939/40*, pp 108-9.



Where We Stand

1. WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule' (The International Workingmen's Association 1864, General Rules).

2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis, of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state based on democratic soviets/workers' councils to suppress the inevitable counter-

revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers' parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers' power.

4. We are fully in support of all mass mobilisations

against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions

5. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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Notes towards a critique of Maoism

11 Nov. 2012 . By Loren Goldner

This is written from the left state capitalist perspective of the League for the Revolutionary Party in the USA so we do not agree, for instance, that the revolutions in Vietnam or North Korea were “bourgeois revolutions with red flags,” but say the revolutions created deformed workers states. But it really is an excellent expose of the bogus “revolutionary” essence of Maoism. It is to be found online in the Portland Intermedia Development Centre; *Development of Maoist Theory and Practice in the Philippines*, author: Jose Maria Sison. <http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2012/11/420253.shtml?discuss>

Maoism was part of a broader movement in the twentieth century of what might be called “bourgeois revolutions with red flags,” as in Vietnam or North Korea.

To understand this, it is important to see that Maoism was one important result of the defeat of the world revolutionary wave in 30 countries (including China itself) which occurred in the years after World War I. The major defeat was in Germany (1918-1921), followed by the defeat of the Russian Revolution (1921 and thereafter), culminating in Stalinism.

Maoism is a variant of Stalinism. 1 The first phase of this defeat, where Mao and China are concerned, took place in the years 1925-1927, during which the small but very strategically located Chinese working class was increasingly radicalized in a wave of strikes. This defeat closed the 1917-1927 cycle of post-World War I worker struggles, which included (in addition to Germany and Russia) mass strikes in Britain, workers councils in northern Italy, vast ferment and strikes in Spain, the “rice riots” in Japan, a general strike in Seattle, and many other confrontations.

By 1925-1927, Stalin controlled the Communist Third International (Comintern). From the beginning of the 1920s, Russian advisors worked closely with the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) of the bourgeois revolutionary Sun Yat-sen, (leader of the 1911 overthrow of the Manchu dynasty) and with the small but important Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded in 1921.

The Third International provided political and military aid to the KMT, which was taken over by Chiang kai-shek (future dictator of Taiwan after 1949); the Comintern in the early to mid-1920s viewed the KMT as a “progressive anti-imperialist” force. Many Chinese Communists actually joined the KMT in these years, some secretly, some openly.

Soviet foreign policy in the mid-1920s involved



an internal faction fight between Stalin and Trotsky. Trotsky's policy (whatever its flaws, and there were many) was for world revolution as the only solution to the isolation of the Soviet Union. Stalin replied with the slogan "Socialism in One Country," an aberration unheard of until that time in the internationalist Marxist tradition. Stalin in this period was allied with the right opposition leader Nikolai Bukharin against Trotsky; Soviet and Third International policy reflected this alliance in a "right turn" to strong support for bourgeois nationalism abroad. Chiang kai-shek himself was an honorary member of the Third International Executive Board in this period. The Third International advocated strong support for Chiang's KMT in its campaign against the "warlords" closely allied with the landowning gentry.

It is important to understand that in these same years, Mao Zedong (who was not yet the central leader of the party) criticized this policy from the right, advocating an even closer alliance between the CCP and the KMT.

In the spring of 1927, Chiang kai-shek turned against the CCP and the radicalized working class, massacring thousands of workers and CCP militants in Shanghai and Canton (now known in the West by its actual Chinese name Guangzhou), who had been completely disarmed by the Comintern's support for the KMT.² This massacre ended the CCP's relationship with the Chinese working class and opened the way for Mao to rise to top leadership by the early 1930s.

The next phase of the CCP was the so-called "Third Period" of the Comintern, which was launched in part in response to the debacle in China. In the Soviet Union, Stalin turned on the Bukharinist "right" (there was in reality no one more reactionary than Stalin) after having finished off the Trotskyist left.³ The Third Period, which lasted from 1928 to 1934, was a period of "ultra-left" adventurism around the world. In China as well as in a number of other colonial and semi-colonial countries, the Third Period involved the slogan of "soviets everywhere." Not a bad slogan in itself, but its practical, voluntarist implementation was a series of disastrous, isolated uprisings in China and Vietnam in 1930 which were totally out of synch with local conditions, and which led to

bloody defeats everywhere.

It was in the recovery from these defeats that Mao became the top leader of the CCP, and began the "Long March" to Yan'an (in remote north-western China) which became a central Maoist myth, and reoriented the CCP to the Chinese peasantry, a much more numerous social class but not, in Marxist terms, a revolutionary class⁴ (though it could be an ally of the working-class revolution, as in Russia during the 1917-1921 Civil War).

Japan had invaded Manchuria (northeast China) in 1931 and the CCP from then until the Japanese defeat at the end of World War II was involved in a three-way struggle with the KMT and the Japanese.

After the Third Period policy led to the triumph of Hitler in Germany (where the Communist Party had attacked the "social fascist" Social Democrats, not the Nazis, as the "main enemy," and even worked with the Nazis against the Social Democrats in strikes), the Comintern in 1935 shifted its line again to the "Popular Front," which meant alliances with "bourgeois democratic" forces against fascism. Throughout the colonial and semi-colonial world, the Communist Parties completely dropped their previous anti-colonial struggle and threw themselves into support for the Western bourgeois democracies. In Vietnam and Algeria, for example, they supported the "democratic" French colonial power. In Spain, they uncritically supported the Republic in the Spanish Revolution and Civil War, during which they helped the Republic crush the anarchists (who had two million members), the independent left POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, a "centrist" party denounced at the time as "Trotskyist") and the Trotskyists themselves. These latter forces had taken over the factories in northeastern Spain and established agrarian communes in the countryside. The Republic and the Communists crushed them all, and then lost the Civil War to Franco.

In China, the Popular Front meant, for the CCP, supporting Chiang kai-shek (who, it will be recalled, had massacred thousands of workers eight years earlier) against Japan.

In the Yan'an refuge of the CCP in these years and through World War II, Mao consolidated his control over the party. His notorious hatchet man

Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1917

<http://marxists.org/>



A. Rykov 1881-1938
Soviet Premier
Shot



N. Bukharin 1888-1938
Politburo
Shot



Y. Sverdlov 1885-1919
President CC
Typhoid



J. Stalin 1879-1953
General Secretary
Cerebral Hemorrhage



G. Zinoviev 1883-1936
Politburo
Shot



M. Uritsky 1873-1918
NKVD
Civil War



L. Trotsky 1879-1940
Commissar Red Army
Assassinated



L. Kamenev 1883-1936
Chairman CC
Shot



V. Lenin 1870-1924
Soviet Premier
Stroke



A. Kollantai 1872-1952
Ambassador Norway
Heart Attack



I. Smilga 1892-1938
Military Rev. Comm.
Shot



A. Joffe 1883 - 1927
Commissar Foreign Affairs
Suicide



V. Nogin 1894-1926
CPC
Natural causes



A. Bubnov 1883-1940
Directorate Red Army
Died in prison



F. Dzerzhinsky 1877-1926
Comm. NKVD
Heart Attack



M.K. Muranov 1873-1959
CC
Natural Causes



G. Lomov 1888-1938
VSNKh
Shot



S. Shaumyan 1878-1918
Baku CPC
Civil War



J. Berzin 1890-1935
NKVD
Strangled



V. Milyutin 1884-1937
VSNKh
Shot



S. Artem 1883-1921
Comm. NKVD
Train Crash



E. Stassova 1873-1966
Secretary CC
Natural Causes



N. Krestinsky 1883-1938
Comm. Intl. Affairs
Shot



P. Dzhabaridze 1880-1918
Baku CPC
Civil War

Kang Sheng helped him root out any opposition or potential rivals with slanderous rumors, show trials and executions. One memorable case was that of Wang Shiwei. He was a committed Communist and had translated parts of Marx's Capital into Chinese. Mao and Kang set him up and put him through several show trials, breaking him and driving him out of the party. (He was finally executed when the CCP left Yan'an in 1947 in the last phase of the civil war against Chiang kai-shek.)

Mao's peasant army conquered all of China by 1949. The Chinese working class, which had been the party's base until 1927, played absolutely no role in this supposed "socialist revolution." The one-time "progressive nationalist" Kuomintang was totally discredited as it became the party of

the landed gentry, full of corruption, responsible for runaway inflation, and commanded by officers more interested in enriching themselves than fighting either the Japanese (before 1945) or the CCP.

The first phase of Mao's rule was from 1949 to 1957. He made no secret of the fact that the new regime was based on the "bloc of four classes" and was carrying out a bourgeois nationalist revolution. It was essentially the program of the bourgeois nationalist Sun Yat-Sen from 25 years earlier. The corrupt landowning gentry was expropriated and eliminated.

But it is important to remember that "land to the peasants" and the expropriation of the pre-capitalist landholders are the bourgeois revolution, as they have been since the French Revolution of

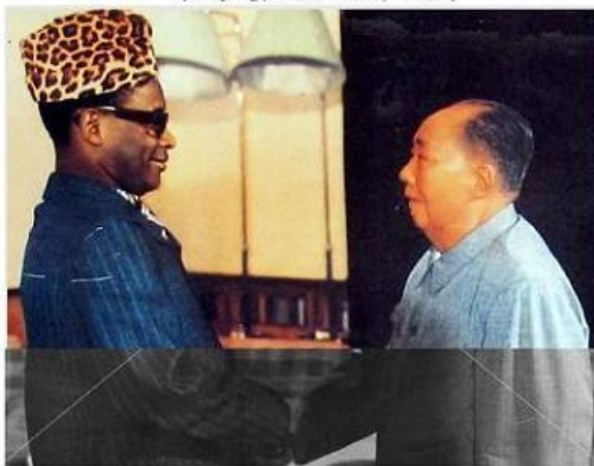
1789. The regime for this reason was genuinely popular and many overseas Chinese who were not Communists returned to help rebuild the country. Some “progressive capitalists” were retained to continue running their factories. After the chaos of the previous 30 years, this stabilization was a breath of fresh air. The People’s Liberation Army also intervened in the Korean War to

help Kim il-sung fight the United States and the United Nations forces. But it is also important not to lose sight of the fact that the Korean War was part of a war between the two Cold War blocs, and that what Kim implemented in North Korea after 1953 was another Stalinist “bourgeois revolution with red flags” based on land to the peasants. (North Korea went on to become the first proletarian hereditary monarchy, now in its third incarnation.)

We also have to see the Chinese Revolution in international context. Stalinism (and Maoism is, as mentioned earlier, a variant of Stalinism) emerged from World War II stronger than ever, having appropriated all of eastern Europe, winning in China, on its way to power in (North) Korea and Vietnam, and had huge prestige in struggles around the colonial and semi-colonial world (which was renamed the Third World as the Cold War divided the globe into two antagonistic blocs centered on the United States and the Soviet Union).

There is no question that Mao and the CCP were somewhat independent of Stalin and the Soviet Union. They were their own type of Stalinists. They were also a million miles from the power of soviets and workers’ councils that had initially characterized the Russian and German Revolu-

Mobutu Sese Seko, President of Zaire, meets Mao Zedong (Beijing; december, 1974)



Zaire's longtime dictator, embezzled over \$5 billion from his country.

tions, on which basis the Comintern was originally founded in 1919. That is a thorny question that is too complex to be unraveled here. But from 1949 until the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the Soviet Union sent thousands of techni-

cians and advisors to China, and trained thousands more Chinese cadre in Soviet universities and institutes, as had been the case since the 1920s. The “model” established in power in the 1950s was essentially the Soviet model, adapted to a country with an even more overwhelming peasant majority than was the case in Russia.

World Stalinism was rocked in 1956 by a series of events: the Hungarian Revolution, in which the working class again established workers’ councils before it was crushed by Russian intervention; the Polish “October,” in which a worker revolt brought to power a “reformed” Stalinist leadership. These uprisings were preceded by Khrushchev’s speech to the twentieth Congress of world Communist Parties, in which he revealed many of Stalin’s crimes, including the massacre of between five to ten million peasants during the collectivizations of the early 1930s.

There were many crimes he did not mention, since he was too implicated in them, and the purpose of his speech was to salvage the Stalinist bureaucracy while disavowing Stalin himself. This was the beginning of “peaceful co-existence” between the Soviet bloc and the West, but the revelations of Stalin’s crimes and the worker revolts in eastern Europe (following the 1953 worker uprising in East Germany) were the beginning of the

end of the Stalinist myth. Bitterly disillusioned militants all over the world walked out of Communist Parties, after finding out that they had devoted decades of their lives to a lie.

Khrushchev's 1956 speech is often referred to by later Maoists as the triumph of "revisionism" in the Soviet Union. The word "revisionism" is itself ideology run amok, since the main thing that was being "revised" was Stalinist terror, which the Maoists and Marxist-Leninists by implication consider to be the "dictatorship of the proletariat." There were between 10 and 20 million people in forced labor camps in the Soviet Union in 1956, and presumably their release (for those who survived years of slave labor, often at the Arctic Circle) was part of "revisionism." For the Maoists, the Khrushchev speech is often also identified with the "restoration of capitalism," showing how superficial their "Marxism" is, with the existence of capitalism being based not on any analysis of real social relationships but on the ideology of this or that leader.

Khrushchev's speech was not well received by Mao and the leaders of the CCP, whose own regimented rule of China was becoming increasingly unpopular.⁵ Thus the regime launched a new phase, called the "Hundred Flowers" campaign, in which the "bourgeois intellectuals" who had rallied to the regime, recoiling from the brutality of the KMT, were invited to "let a hundred flowers bloom" and openly voice their criticisms.

The outpouring of criticism was of such an unexpected volume that it was quickly shut down by Mao and the CCP, who began to characterize the Hundred Flowers campaign as "letting the snakes out of their holes" in order to "smash" them once and for all. Many critics were arrested and sent off to forced labor camps.

Internationally, however, Maoism began to become an international tendency, becoming attractive to some people who had left the pro-Soviet Communist Parties after Khrushchev's speech. This was a hard-core ultra-Stalinist minority (who felt, for example, that their own country's CP had not supported the Soviet invasion to crush the Hungarian Revolution forcefully enough). By the early 1960s, in the United States, Europe and around the Third World, these currents would become the "Marxist-Leninist" parties aligned with China against both the United States and

Soviet "social imperialism."

In China itself, the regime needed to shift gears after the disaster of the Hundred Flowers period. There was growing tension at the top levels of the CCP between Mao and the more Soviet-influenced technocratic bureaucrats, who were focused on building up heavy industry. This was the factional situation that led to the "Cultural Revolution" that erupted in 1965.

Therefore Mao launched the country in 1958 on the so-called "Great Leap Forward," in which Soviet-style heavy industry was to be replaced by enlisting peasants in small industrial "backyard" production everywhere. The peasants were forced into the "People's Communes" and set to work to catch up with the economic level of the capitalist West in 10-15 years. Everywhere pots, pans and utensils as well as family heirlooms were melted down for backyard small kilns to produce steel, at killing paces of work. The result was a huge drain of peasant labor away from raising crops, leading to famine by 1960-1961 in which an estimated 10-20 million people starved to death.⁶

The debacle of the Great Leap Forward was also a terrible blow to Mao's standing within the CCP. It represented an extreme form of the kind of voluntarism, at the expense of real material conditions, which had always characterized Mao's thinking, as summed up in his famous line about "painting portraits on the blank page of the people" (some Marxist!).⁷ The Soviet-influenced technocrats around Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping basically kicked Mao upstairs into a symbolic figurehead, too important to purge outright but stripped of all real power. Thus the battle lines were drawn for what became, a few years later, the "Cultural Revolution."

The "Cultural Revolution" was Mao's attempt at a comeback.⁸ It was a factional struggle at the top level of the CCP in which millions of university and high school students were mobilized everywhere to attack "revisionism" and return Mao to real power. But this factional struggle, and the previous marginalization of Mao that lay behind it, was hardly advertised as the real reason for this process in which tens of thousands of people were killed and millions of lives were wrecked.⁹ China was thrown into ideology run amok on a scale arguably even greater than under Stalin at the peak of his power. Millions of educated people suspect-

ed of “revisionism” (or merely the victims of some personal feud), including technicians and scientists, were sent off to the countryside (“rustification”) to “learn from the peasants,” which in reality involved them in crushing forced labor in which many were worked to death.

Politics was in command,” with party ideologues and not surgeons, in charge of medical operations in Chinese hospitals—with predictable consequences. Schools were closed for three years in the cities—though not in the countryside (19660-1969)—while young people from universities and high schools ran around the country humiliating and sometimes killing people designated by the Maoist faction as a “revisionist” and a “Liu Shaoqi capitalist roader” (Liu Shaoqi himself died of illness in prison). The economy was wrecked.

In 1978, when Deng Xiaoping (who also performed hard rural labor during these years) returned to power, Chinese agricultural production per capita was no higher than it had been in 1949.

In such a situation, where revisionist rule was to be replaced by “people’s power,” things got out of hand with some currents who took Mao’s slogan “It is right to rebel” a bit too far, and began to question the whole nature of CCP rule since 1949. In these cases, as in the “Shanghai Commune” of early 1967, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) had to step in against an independent formation that included radicalized workers. The PLA was in fact one of the main “winners” of the Cultural Revolution, for its role in stamping out currents that became a third force against both the “capitalist roaders” and the Maoists.

(During all this, Kang Sheng, the hatchet man of Yan’an, returned to power and helped vilify, oust and sometimes execute Mao’s factional opponents, as he had done the first time around.)

Perhaps the most interesting case of things “going too far,” along with the brief Shanghai Commune, before the army marched in, was the Shengwulian current in Mao’s own Hunan province. There, workers and students who had gone through the whole process produced a series of documents that became famous throughout China, analyzing the country as being under the control of a “new bureaucratic ruling class.” While the Shengwulian militants disguised their viewpoint with bows to the “thought of Mao tse-tung” and “Marxism-Leninism,” their texts were read throughout China, and at the top levels of the party itself, where they were clearly recognized for what they were: a fundamental challenge to both factions in power. They were mercilessly crushed.¹⁰



Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping & Pol Pot



Further interesting critiques to emerge from the years of the Cultural Revolution were those written by Yu Luo, at the time an apprentice worker and, later, the manifesto of Wei Jingsheng, a 28-year-old electrician at the Beijing Zoo on the “Democracy Wall” in Beijing in 1978. Yu’s text was, like Shengwulian’s, diffused and read all over China. It was a critique of the Cultural Revolution’s “bloodline”

definition of “class” by family background and political reliability, rather than by one’s relationship to the means of production. Yu was executed for his troubles in 1970. The Democracy Wall, which was supposed to accompany Deng Xiaoping’s return to power, also got out of hand and was suppressed in 1979.

Mao’s faction re-emerged triumphant by 1969. This included his wife, Jiang Qing, and three other co-factioneers who would be arrested and deposed as the “Gang of Four”¹¹ shortly after Mao’s death in 1976.¹² This victory, it is often overlooked, coincided with the beginning of

Mao's quiet outreach to the United States as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. There was active but local combat between Chinese and Soviet forces along their mutual border in 1969 and, as a result, Mao banned all transit of Soviet material support to North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, a ban which remained in effect until the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Mao received US President Nixon in Beijing in early 1972, while the United States was raining bombs on North Vietnam.

This turn was hardly the first instance of a conservative foreign policy at the expense of movements and countries outside China. Already in 1965, the Chinese regime, based on its prestige as the center of "Marxist-Leninist" opposition to Soviet "revisionism" after the Sino-Soviet split, had encouraged the powerful Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) into a close alliance with Indonesia's populist-nationalist leader, Sukarno. It was an exact repeat of the CCP's alliance with Chiang kai-shek in 1927, and it ended the same way, in a bloodbath in which 600,000 PKI members and sympathizers were killed in fall 1965 in a military coup, planned with the help of US advisers and academics.

Beijing said nothing about the massacre until 1967 (when it complained that the Chinese embassy in Jakarta had been stoned during the events). In 1971, China also openly applauded the bloody suppression of the Trotskyist student movement in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In the same year, it supported (together with the United States and against Soviet ally India), Pakistani dictator Yaya Khan, who oversaw massive repression in Bangladesh when that country (previously part of Pakistan) declared independence.

In 1971, another bizarre turn in domestic policy also took place, echoing Mao's fascination with ancient dynastic court intrigue. Up to that point, Lin Biao had been openly designated as Mao's successor. The Maoist press abroad, as well as the French intelligentsia which at the time was decidedly pro-Maoist, trumpeted the same line. Suddenly Lin Biao disappeared from public view, and in



Mao Zedong with Imelda Marcos in Beijing - 1974



Jiang Qing with Philippine First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos.



Bongbong Marcos, Mao Zedong & Imelda Marcos



Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) with Imelda

late 1971 it was learned that he, too, supposedly Mao's closest confidant for years, had been a capitalist roader and a deep-cover KMT agent all along. According to the official story, Lin had commandeered a military plane and fled toward the Soviet border; the plane had crashed in Mongolia, killing him and all aboard.¹³ For months, western Maoists denounced this account, published in the world press, as a pure bourgeois fabrication, including what Simon Leys characterized as the "most important pro-Maoist daily newspaper in the West," the very high tone *Le Monde* (Paris), whose Beijing correspondent was a Maoist devotee. Then, when the Chinese government itself confirmed the story, the Western Maoists turned on a dime and howled with the wolves against Lin Biao. Simon Leys remarked that these fervent believers had transformed the old Chinese proverb "Don't beat a dog after it has fallen into the water" into "Don't beat a dog until it has fallen into the water."

This was merely the beginning of the bizarre turn of Maoist world strategy and Chinese foreign policy. The "main enemy" and "greater danger" was no longer the world imperialism centered in the United States, but Soviet "social imperialism." Thus, when US-backed Augusto Pinochet overthrew the Chilean government of Salvador Allende in 1973, China immediately recognized Pinochet and hailed the coup. When South African troops

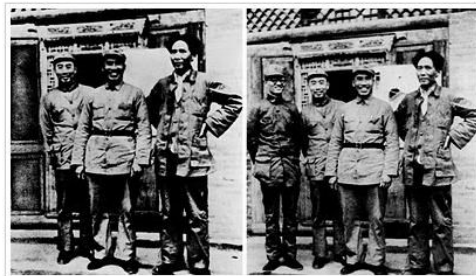
invaded Angola in 1975 after Angolan independence under the pro-Soviet MPLA, China backed South Africa. During the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-75, the Maoist forces there reached out to the far right. Maoist currents throughout western Europe called for the strengthening of NATO against the Soviet threat. China supported Philippine dictator Fernando Marcos in his attempt to crush the Maoist guerrilla movements in that country.

Maoism had had a certain serious impact on New Left forces in the West in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Unraveling the factional differences among these groups would take us too far afield, and most of them had faded away by the 1980s. But “Maoism,” as interpreted in different ways, was important in Germany, Italy, France and the United States. Some groups, such as the ultra-Stalinist Progressive Labor Party in the United States, saw the writing on the wall as early as 1969 and broke with China in that year. Most of these groups were characterized by Stalinist thuggery against opponents, and occasionally among themselves.¹⁴ Their influence was as diffuse as it was pernicious; ca. 1975, there were hundreds of “Marxist-Leninist” study groups around the United States, and hundreds of cadre had entered the factories to organize the working class. By the mid-1970s, three main Maoist groups had emerged as dominant in the US left: the Revolutionary Union (RU) under Bob Avakian (later renamed the RCP), the October League (OL) under Mike Klonsky, and the Communist Labor Party (CLP). To really understand some of the differences between them, one needed to know their relationship to the old “revisionist” Communist Party USA. The more moderate groups, such as the October League, hearkened back to Earl Browder’s leadership during the Popular Front years.

More hard-line groups, such as the CLP, looked to the more openly Stalinist William Z. Foster. These and other smaller groups fought ideological battles over the proper attitude to take toward Enver Hoxha’s Albania, which for some (after China’s pro-US turn) remained, for them, the sole truly “Marxist-Leninist” country in the world. One small group trumpeted the “Three 3’s: Third International/Third Period/Third World.” In Germany, New Left Maoism was on the as-



in the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union, people who had fallen out of favor with the paranoid Stalin would suddenly be airbrushed out.



At around the same time, Chairman Mao was doing the same thing to his disappeared political enemies- disappearing them again.

cendant after 1968, a process which it gingerly termed the “positive overcoming of the anti-authoritarian movement” of that year. A major current was the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), which fought against the much larger DKP (Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, the pro-Soviet party, which itself still barely accounted for 1 percent of the vote in German elections). Out of the KPD came a multitude of smaller “K-Gruppen,” with poetic names such as KPD-ML Rote Heimat (Red Homeland, with distinct populist overtones of “soil”).

Only the DKP had any influence in the working class, with its infiltration of the trade unions; it was content to sit back after 1972 when the Social Democratic government of Willy Brandt issued its “radical decree” and came down hard on the K-Gruppen, much as the Italian Communist Party (PCI), with 25 percent of the vote in the 1976 elections, not only sat back while the Italian government criminalized the entire far left as “terrorists”; it actively helped the government in the suppression of the far left after the Red Brigades kidnapped and executed the right-wing politician Aldo Moro in spring 1978, as he was on his way to sign the “historical compromise” which would have allowed the PCI to join the Christian Democrats in a grand coalition.

In France, Maoism never had the clout of the much larger main Trotskyist parties (Lutte Ouvrière, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, all of which are still around today, in the latter two cases under different names). Most of the Maoist “Marxist-Leninist” groups had been discredited by their manipulative role during the May-June 1968 general strike, such as one which marched to the barricades on the night of the most serious street fighting (pitting thousands of people against thousands of cops), announced that the whole thing was a government provocation, and urged everyone to go home, as they themselves proceeded to do.

But in the spring of 1970, one small ultra-Stalinist and ultra-militant Maoist group, the Gauche Proletarienne (Proletarian Left), momentarily recruited Jean-Paul Sartre to its defense when the government banned it, following some spectacular militant interventions around the country. Sartre, who had over the previous 20 years been successively pro-Soviet, pro-Cuba and then pro-China, saved the GP from extinction, but it collapsed of its own ideological frenzy shortly thereafter. (It notably produced two particularly cretinous neo-liberal ideologues after 1977, Bernard-Henry Lévi and André Glucksmann, as well as Serge July, editor-in-chief of the now very respectable daily *Liberation*, which began as the newspaper of the GP.) Former French Maoists turned up in the strangest places, such as Roland Castro, a fire-eating Maoist in 1968, who became an intimate of Socialist President François Mitterrand, and was appointed to a leading technocratic position.

Maoism in Britain again had next to no influence, whereas both the Trotskyist Socialist Labor League (SLL) and the IS (later SWP), at their 1970s peaks, had thousands of members and a serious presence in the working class.

In Japan, finally, the most advanced capitalist country in Asia, Maoism (as in Britain and in France), had no chance against the large, sophisticated New Left groups in the militant Zengakuren, which not only had no time for Maoism but not even for Trotskyism, and which characterized both the Soviet Union and China as “state capitalist.” (Only the small underground, pro-North

Korean “Red Army” could in any way have been characterized as Maoist.)

In 1976, as mentioned earlier, the Maoist Gang of Four, who up to Mao’s death had been at the pinnacle of state power, were arrested, jailed and never heard from again, as the “revisionists” headed by Deng Xiaoping returned to power and prepared to launch China on the road to “market socialism,” or “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” beginning in 1978.

This bizarre ideological period finally ended in 1978-79, when China, now firmly an ally of the United States, attacked Vietnam and was rudely pushed back by the Vietnamese army under General Giap (of Dien Bien Phu fame). Vietnam, still allied with the Soviet Union, had occupied Cambodia to oust the pro-Maoist Khmer Rouge, who had taken over the country in 1975 and who went on to kill upward of one million people. In response to China’s attack on Vietnam, the Soviet Union threatened to attack China. For any remaining Western Maoists at this point, the consternation was palpable.

As elsewhere in different forms, the Maoists in the United States did not go quietly into that dark night. Many of those who went into industry or otherwise colonized working-class communities rose to positions of influence in the trade union bureaucracy, such as Bill Fletcher of the Freedom Road group, who was briefly a top aide to John Sweeney when the latter took over the AFL-CIO in 1995. Mike Klonsky of the October League traveled to China in 1976 to be anointed as the official liaison to the Chinese regime after the fall of the Gang of Four, but that did not prevent the OL from fading away. The RCP sent colonizers to West Virginia mining towns, where they were involved in some wildcat strikes (some of those strikes, however, were against teaching Darwin in the schools).

The RCP also supported ROAR, the racist anti-busing coalition, during the crisis in Boston in 1975. Bob Avakian, in 1978, with four other RCP members, rushed the podium when Deng Xiaoping appeared at a press conference in Washington with Jimmy Carter to consummate the US-China alliance; they were charged with multiple felonies and Avakian remains in exile in Paris to this day. In 1984 and 1988, 15 Maoists of different

stripes were deeply involved in Jesse Jackson's run for the presidency, giving rise in 1984 after Jackson lost out to the "Marxist-Leninists for Mondale" phenomenon.

Members of the Communist Workers Party (CWP) suffered a worse fate, when in 1979 members of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina (where they had organized in several textile towns) fired on their rally, killing five of them. But during Occupy Oakland in the fall of 2011, it emerged that no less than Oakland Mayor Jean Quan, as well as some of her key advisors, and high-level members of the Alameda County Labor Council, were former members of the selfsame CWP. More recently, former members of the RCP who had their fill of Avakian's cult of personality formed the Kasama network, which now has a much larger, if more diffuse influence, at least on the internet.

On a world scale, Maoists recently joined a coalition government in Nepal, and various groups, some reaching back to the 1960s or even earlier, continue to be active in the Philippines. The Indian Naxalites, who were stone Maoists in the 1970s before they were crushed by Indira Gandhi, have made something of a comeback in poor rural areas. The Shining Path group in Peru, which was similarly crushed by Fujimori, has made a steady comeback there, openly referring to such groups as the Cambodian Khmer Rouge as a model.

To conclude, it is important to consider the post-1978 fate of Maoism in China itself. For the regime which, since 1978, has overseen nearly 35 years of virtually uninterrupted and unprecedented economic growth, averaging close to 10 percent per year over decades, with the methods of "market socialism," Mao Zedong remains an indispensable icon of the ruling ideology. In officialese, Mao was "70 percent right and 30 percent wrong." The "wrong" part usually means the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, although serious discussion and research on those events remains largely if not wholly taboo. As a result, a rose-tinted nostalgic view of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution has become de rigeur in the so-called Chinese New Left.¹⁶ There have even been echoes of Maoism in the recent fall of top-level bureaucrat Bo Xilai, former strongman of Chongqing with a decidedly populist style

which led some of his opponents to warn of the dangers of a "new Cultural Revolution." Given the impossibility, in China, of frank public discussion of the entirety of Mao's years in power (and before), and the small fragments of information available to the young generations about those years, it is hardly surprising that currents opposing the appalling spread of social inequality and insecurity since 1978 would turn back to that mythical past. This hardly makes such a turn less reactionary and dangerous.

Everything that happened after 1978 had its origins in the nature of the regime before 1978. There was no "counter-revolution," still less a transformation of the previously existing social relations of production.

Once again, Maoism reveals its highly idealist and voluntarist conception of politics by a focus on the ideology of top leaders, as it previously did with Khrushchev's 1956 speech and thaw. China from 1949 to 1978 was preparing the China of 1978 to the present. Even those pointing to the "shattering of the iron rice bowl," the No. 1 ideological underpinning of the old regime, ignore the practice of significant casualized labor in the industrial centers in the 1950s and 1960s. Until a true "new left" in China seriously rethinks the place of Maoism in the larger context of the history of the Marxist movement, and particularly its origins in Stalinism and not in the true, defeated world proletarian moment of 1917-1921, it is doomed to reproduce, in China as in different parts of the developing world, either grotesque copies of Maoism's periodic ultra-Stalinism (as in Peru) or to be the force that prepares the coming of "market socialism" by destroying the pre-capitalist forms of agriculture and engaging in forced, autarchic industrialization until Western, or Japanese and Korean, or (why not?) Chinese capital¹⁷ arrives to allow the full emergence of capitalism.

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Notes

1. The term "Stalinism" is used here throughout to describe a new form of class rule by a bureaucratic elite that, in different times and different situations, fought against pre-capitalist social for-

mations (as in China) or against Western capitalism. Some, myself included, see Stalinism as “state capitalism”; a smaller number, influenced by the theory of Max Schachtman, see it as “bureaucratic collectivism.” Orthodox Trotskyists call Stalinist regimes “deformed workers’ states”; the Bordighists simply call it “capitalism.” Marxist-Leninists see such regimes as... socialism. This is a huge debate which has taken place ever since the 1920s but one could do worse than read Walter Daum’s *The Life and Death of Stalinism*, which, while defending a variant of the Trotskyist view, argues that the Soviet Union and all its “offspring” were state capitalist. Outside those countries where a Stalinist regime has state power, I use the term “Stalinist” to describe those forces which are fighting to establish one, or apologists for one or another version of “real existing socialism.”

2. All this is recounted in detail in Harold Isaac’s book *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, first published in 1934 and republished many times since. Readers

should be cautioned that Isaacs, a Trotskyist when he wrote the book, later became a “State Department socialist” and toned down the book with each reprint, but later editions still tell the essential story.

3. These three factions arose after Lenin’s death in 1924: the Trotskyist left advocating export of the revolution and an intense industrialization policy based on strong extraction of a surplus from the peasantry; Bukharin argued for “socialism at a snail’s pace” with a much laxer attitude toward petty producer capitalism by the peasants, and Stalin “wavering” in between. On this, see the review of the book of John Marot in the current issue of IN.

4. To put it in a nutshell: the historical trajectory of peasants under pre-capitalist conditions has shown itself in most cases to be toward private small-plot cultivation. In such conditions, as in Russia, they can be the allies of a proletarian revolution, in which the “democratic tasks” of socialist revolution by the workers combine with those of the bourgeois revolution (land to the peasants).

There is a bourgeois mode of production (capitalism), there is a transition to the communist mode of production in which the working class is the ruling class (socialism); there is no “peasant mode of production,” which limits the historical role of peasants to being allies of one dominant class or another.

5. See for example Ygael Gluckstein’s early book *Mao’s China* (1955), particularly the chapter entitled “The Regimentation of the Working Class.” Gluckstein (who later became better known under his pseudonym Tony Cliff, leader of the British International Socialists and then renamed the Socialist Workers’ Party) was the first person to systematically analyze China as a form of state capitalism.

6. Some estimates run as high as 35 million. Past a certain point, the exact figures are

not so important as the unmitigated disaster caused by the policy.

7. Apparently neither Mao nor any other member of the CCP had read Marx at the time of its founding in 1921. They emerged out of the many ideological influences current in East Asia before World War I: socialism (vaguely understood), anarchism, Tolstoyan pacificism, and Henry Georgism, among others. “Voluntarism” as the term is used here refers to such episodes as the Great Leap Forward, or the (above-mentioned) characterization of the Soviet bloc as “capitalist” based on Khrushchev’s speech, or the (more idealist) definition of class in the Cultural Revolution not by an individual’s relation to the means of



production but by their family background or “revisionist” ideas. For background on the voluntarist ideologies current at the time of the founding of the CCP, cf. Maurice Meisner, *Li ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*; on Mao’s voluntarism inherited from his early reading of Kant, cf. Frederic Wakeman, *History and will: Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-tung’s Thought*

8. The most important analysis of the Cultural Revolution in these terms is Simon Leys’s *Chairman Mao’s New Clothes*, published in French in 1969 and translated into English a few years later. Leys also wrote brilliant books on the cultural desert created by Maoism in power, both before and after the Cultural Revolution: *Chinese Shadows*, *The Burning Forest*, and *Broken Images*. His work is required reading for anyone nostalgic for the Cultural Revolution today.

9. Some flavor of these events is described by the liberal academic Song Yongyi. His book on the massacres of the Cultural Revolution is unfortunately only in French and in Chinese. He also edited an *Encyclopedia of the Cultural Revolution* which is dry and academic.

10. For Shengwuian’s most important statement (1968) see their text “Whither China?”

11. The Gang of Four came to be seen as the leaders of the Cultural Revolution towards its end. The original central organ that was directing things both openly and behind the scenes was comprised of 10 people. Among these were Kang Sheng, Chen Boda, Jiang Qing, Yao Wenxuan, Wang Li and others.

12. Once again, the books of Simon Leys, cited above, are all beautiful portraits of the ideological and cultural climate in China up to 1976. One curious book, to be read with caution but useful nonetheless, is by Dr. Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (1994). Li was Mao’s personal physician from 1956 to 1976 and lived most of those years in the elite Beijing compound with other top party personnel, and traveled with Mao wherever he went. The English translation of the book was greeted with media-driven sensationalist focus on accounts of Mao’s voracious sexual appetite for beautiful young women, which actually makes up a minor theme. Its real interest is the portrait of the comings and goings of the top

CCP leaderships during the last 20 years of Mao’s life, their rises and their downfalls. It also recounts Mao’s deep reading in Chinese dynastic history, the so-called “24 dynastic histories” covering the years 221 BC-1644 AD. Mao’s fascination was above all with court intrigue. According to Li, he had the greatest admiration for some of the “most ruthless and cruel” emperors, such as Qin Shihuangdi (221-206 BC), who founded the short-lived Qin dynasty. Qin ordered the infamous “Burning of the Books” and executed many Confucian scholars (p. 122). Another favorite was the Emperor Sui Yangdi (604-618), who ordered the building of the Grand Canal by massive conscripted labor, during which thousands died.

13. But another account surfaced, of which an English translation was published in 1983: Yao Ming-Le, *The Conspiracy and Death of Lin Biao*. It purports to be a pseudonymous account written by a high-ranking CCP member who was assigned to develop the cover story of Lin’s flight and death. According to Yao, a struggle to the death between Mao and Lin had been underway, and Lin was plotting a coup to overthrow and kill Mao. The plot was discovered, and Lin Biao was arrested and executed. No less a skeptic of sources coming out of China than Simon Leys, in his book *The Burning Forest*, argues that Yao’s account agrees with other known facts

14. For a full account, see Max Elbaum’s book *Revolution in the Air*, which purports to see these groups as the “best and the brightest” to emerge from the American 60s. For a short course, see my polemical review of Elbaum, “Didn’t See The Same Movie.”

15. This foray into Democratic Party politics is enthusiastically recounted in Max Elbaum’s book cited above.

16. See the article of Lance Carter on the Chinese New Left in *Insurgent Notes* No. 1.

17. Chinese investment in Africa in recent years, aimed first of all at the procurement of raw materials, has taken on serious dimensions; already some African leaders are warning of a “new colonialism.” On the level of high comedy, Western leaders have the effrontery to solemnly warn China “not to exploit Africa’s natural resources.”

Refutation of Professor Grover Furr's *Evidence of Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan*

Extract from Three Quick Examples of Leftist Pseudo-Science Posted by Mike Ely on Kasama Blog 4/10/ 2010

The following article is from Mike Ely on the Kasama blog (<http://kasamaproject.org/2010/10/04/three-quick-examples-of-leftist-pseudo-science/>). It is written from a Maoist standpoint as is evident in the concluding remarks.

However it does the job of refuting the methodology employed by Furr and other conspiracy theorists very well. The methodology of Trotskyism vs. Maoism/Marxism/Leninism (in all its varieties) is another task for a later date. Of central importance here is the Maoist theory of the qualitative difference between the nationalist and comprador bourgeoisie in the semi-colonial world.

The documents by Grover Furr I have been reading on Soviet history form another set of examples. Grover is a long time communist, English professor and amateur historian. He has undertaken a project to prove that the original Soviet explanations of the purges and purge trials are being factually substantiated by real evidence (including the materials in the Soviet archives).

Having a particular interest in Soviet history and being urged by a good friend to engage Grover, I have read his stuff. I have to say it is one of the most astonishing projects of pseudo-research I have seen (outside of creationist anti-evolution efforts). I am thinking in particular of one major document by Grover, "Evidence of Leon Trotsky's Collaboration with Germany and Japan." It appeared in Cultural Logic for 2009, and it appears on Grover's site with the simple claim: "On the evidence there's no doubt that Trotsky conspired with the Germans and Japanese as alleged during the second and third Moscow Trials of January 1937 and March 1938."

What follows (when you print and read his piece) is virtually every kind of logical fallacy we have listed above. There is in fact, no evidence that Trotsky "conspired with the Germans and Japanese as alleged." And what is alleged is after all both major and very specific: That Trotsky was a paid agent of the fascists, that he conspired to overthrow socialism, kill the communist leaders and help carve up the Soviet Union between the various Axis powers!

I want to say, in passing, that Grover does occasionally debunk the most extreme and deceitful anticommunist claims. There are lots of ridiculous charges (example: that Stalin deliberately unleashed famine in the Ukraine as a form of genocide against Ukrainian people).



Unregenerate Stalinist Grover Furr of the English Department, Montclair State University. His works include *The Sixty-One Untruths of Nikita Khrushchev*. In interview in the Georgian Times on 2010.11.09 he claims, "The (post WWII) Deportation of Nationalities was Excusable".

And Grover does help refute them in some of his documents. But his other delusional work discredits such refutations.

In his specific and most energetic claims (i.e. that the official Soviet allegations in the show trials were credible and proven) Grover has to fall back on misdirection. The only evidence of those old school purge-trial charges remains the “evidence” presented in those trials: the confessions of men in prison, men who facing

death penalties, fear for their families and possible torture. If one has a sceptical attitude toward confessions under such conditions, then there is no other evidence of the core allegations. Grover’s writings do everything we’ve been discussing:

For example they prove (in great detail) that Trotsky and other formed a political group with a specific program, and alliances, and sought to struggle for their line (and for the replacement of the party currents that were then in power). In

other words, he proves that there was a political opposition (or rather several) within the CPSU(B) and its various levels.

But, that is obvious to everyone and does not need proving. And by proving the existence of a political opposition you have not proven that Leon Trotsky worked for the Nazis. It is (as the “fallacies” document discusses) an example of red herring, non sequitor, slippery slope exaggeration.

That method appears over and over in much of

Grover’s work — he documents and proves all kinds of things with baroque flourishes of detail, but just not what he claims to have proven. While Grover claims to have evidence, a lot of his case revolves around a “special pleading” about why there actually is no real evidence. He argues that the conspirators would not have written anything down, and evidence would have been carefully destroyed, and so on.

But in fact, it is not possible for a major con-

While Grover claims to have evidence, a lot of his case revolves around a “special pleading” about why there actually is no real evidence. He argues that the conspirators would not have written anything down, and evidence would have been carefully destroyed, and so on. But in fact, it is not possible for a major conspiracy and spy network riddled the Soviet Union in service to the Axis government without some evidence (if only in Nazi records) — conferences, reports, directives, funding records... as the news of this conspiracy went up and down the Nazi chain of command. The fact that six decades of historical research (including into German, Japanese and Soviet government archives) has not produced any evidence of a vast complex espionage operation (of the kind the Soviets alleged) shows that there was no such operation.

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The fact that six decades of historical research (including into German, Japanese and Soviet government archives) has not produced any evidence of a vast complex espionage operation (of the kind the Soviets alleged)

shows that there was no such operation.

The Trotskyist opposition was a political line struggle within the ruling Soviet party. Their political program may well have been disastrous (and I believe it was), but the Stalin-era assertion that oppositionists were secret Nazis was wrong (politically, theoretically and factually) — even if Stalin himself may have believed it and then demanded that subordinates document it.

Grover also makes a classic “excluded middle” argument: by saying that anyone opposing his

arguments is therefore clearly influenced by the anticommunist arguments — as if these historical matters exist on a simple binary grid where you either agree with Vyshinsky (channelled through Grover Furr) or take your side with Robert Conquest. And so in Grover's work, other analyses of these events (by scholars known for not being anticommunist) don't make much of an appearance.

Grover also lavishly argues using “weasel words,” “proof by verbosity” (seemingly endless verbosity) and “appeal to authority” (both his own and Stalin's).

I'm particularly struck by the argument (that has appeared in various places) that we have to accept Grover's scholarly authority because he has spent years on this mission, read in the Soviet archives personally, and because we don't ourselves speak Russian in order to dissect the primary material. This is all logically false.

First, Grover is hardly the only person who had plumbed those archives — and there are major works that provide many key documents in English so that we can all explore key and revealing sections of the primary material. I'm thinking, in particular, of J. Arch Getty's *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*.

Further, those communists who defended the purges and show trials “down the line” were (for sixty years) totally disinterested in data and evidence — and were rather militant about proclaiming their beliefs without evidence. They didn't care about evidence. And for someone to claim now (suddenly) that none of us (not one) has any right to an opinion here without learning Russian (!) and spending years in Moscow archives...because we (supposedly) just don't know the evidence...

And at the same time, to claim that the massive evidence against their own theories must be permanently suspect (because it comes from KGB controlled archives). Well, the switcheroos and double-think are a bit much to bear.

It is not as if the Russian archives are a new thing — they have been open for literally decades. Or as if no honest man (other than Grover Furr) has gone there. If there was really any new real evidence establishing the existence of a big world-circling Nazi-Trotsky network of spies and assassins — don't you think it would have leaked into public view?

It has even been mentioned in discussion that Grover Furr has gotten publicity for his views within the modern Russian press where interviews with him are published. So? That is an example of the logical fallacy called “the bandwagon effect” — and I have to add that getting a theory promoted in the Russian media is hardly evidence of credibility. Russian politics is notorious for its love of crackpot and paranoid theories of many kinds (especially if they, unlike Grover's theories, have an anti-Semitic underbelly).

It would take a month to dissect Grover's article on the Trotsky-Nazi connection, and unravel all the various levels of misdirection. But the fact remains that there is not embedded in it any piece of evidence (at all!) that documents his claims.

I have asked him (several times) to simply email me a one or two sentence message that mentions the single fact that he believes best documents this alleged conspiracy. And I'm still waiting. We don't actually need seventy pages of hemming and hawing — a one paragraph description of one real documented fact would suffice to put Grover's theory on a different plane (a report in a Nazi file, a pay stub, a memoir from one of the architects of the conspiracy, one eye witness account that isn't a prisonhouse confession... one simple real piece of evidence of any kind of the actual allegations that Grover says are confirmed.)

Here too the issue really is line and avoidance of line:

Stalin claimed that antagonist classes had disappeared in the 1930s Soviet Union and so the only material basis for widespread opposition

was the actions of old class elements who had wormed their way into power in close alliance with paid agents of foreign enemies. It is a particular theory about the political oppositions within the Communist Party.

Mao by contrast (based on an assessment of both Stalin's theories and Soviet history) concluded that there was a material basis within socialism and within the Communist Party for "capitalist roaders" to emerge and contend for power. It is an opposing theory.

By announcing that the official Soviet explanation for their purges were factually correct,

Grover is making a statement on a crucial (dare I say world historic) question of "where do the forces of capitalist restoration come from?"

And he does so in the guise of an objective scholarly exploration of historical evidence — and so does not engage his own views of this theoretical question, and does not seriously engage the Maoist counter-position.

It is a two-line struggle over a major question waged (among communists) using a method of bogus factual "proof" based on bogus claims of obscure evidence.

Gestapo–NKVD Conferences

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, (Redirected from Gestapo-NKVD Conferences) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestapo%E2%80%93NKVD_Conferences,

The Gestapo–NKVD conferences were a series of meetings organized in late 1939 and early 1940[1][2] whose purpose was to enable the German and Soviet security forces (the Gestapo and NKVD respectively) to share information regarding their operations in Poland. In spite of their differences on other issues, both Heinrich Himmler and Lavrentiy Beria had common purposes as far as the fate of Poland was concerned,[3] and the conferences discussed coordinating plans for occupation of the Polish nation and in fighting the Polish resistance movement,[4][5] which was an irritant to both Nazi and Soviet occupiers of Poland. Out of four conferences,[4] the third took place in the famous Tatra Mountains spa of Zakopane[1] in south Poland, and is the most remembered (the Zakopane Conference). From the Soviet side, several officers of the NKVD participated in these meetings, the Germans bringing a group of experts from the Gestapo. After the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact on 23 August 1939, Germany invaded Poland on 1 September[6][7] and the Soviet Union invaded Poland on 17 September[6][8] resulting in the occupation of Poland by the

Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

First Conference

Little is known about this meeting. It reportedly took place on 27 September 1939 in Brześć nad Bugiem, while some units of the Polish Army were still fighting (see: Invasion of Poland). Both sides expected that Polish resistance would start soon, and they discussed ways of dealing with the possible activities of such resistance.[2]

Second Conference

This meeting took place some time at the end of November 1939, probably in Przemyśl[2] — a city which—between September 1939 and June 1941—was divided into German and Soviet parts. Apart from talks of fighting Polish resistance, the Soviets and the Germans discussed ways of exchanging Polish POWs. Also, first discussions about the occupation of Poland were started. Some historians claim this meeting took place in Lwów.[1][3] It is also claimed a meeting was held in December.[5][9] Secret protocol of German–Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty "Both parties will toler-

ate in their territories no Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose.”

Third Conference

This one is the best known, and took place in Zakopane,[10] starting on 20 February 1940[5] in the villa “Pan Tadeusz”, located at the Droga do Bialego street close to the entry to the Bialego Valley. The German side was represented by Adolf Eichmann and an official by the name of Zimmermann, who later became chief of the Radom District of the General Government. The Soviet delegation was headed by Grigoriy Litvinov and — among others — Rita Zimmerman (director of a gold mine in Kolyma) and a man named Eichmans, creator of an efficient way of killing in the back of the head.[2]

According to several sources, one of the results of this conference was the German Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion (see: German AB Action operation in Poland),[11] elimination of Krakow intelligentsia Sonderaktion Krakau and the Soviet Katyn massacre[5][12] In his 1991 book *Stalin: Breaker of Nations*, British historian Robert Conquest stated: “Terminal horror suffered by so many millions of innocent Jewish, Slavic, and other European peoples as a result of this meeting of evil minds is an indelible stain on the history and integrity of Western civilization, with all of its humanitarian pretensions”. Also, Professor George Watson from Cambridge University concluded in his “Rehearsal for the Holocaust?” commentary (June 1981) that the fate of the interned Polish officers may have been decided at this conference.[13][14] This is however disputed by other historians, who point out that there is no documentary evidence confirming any cooperation on that issue, that the existing Soviet documentation actually makes such a cooperation improbable and that it is reasonable to say that

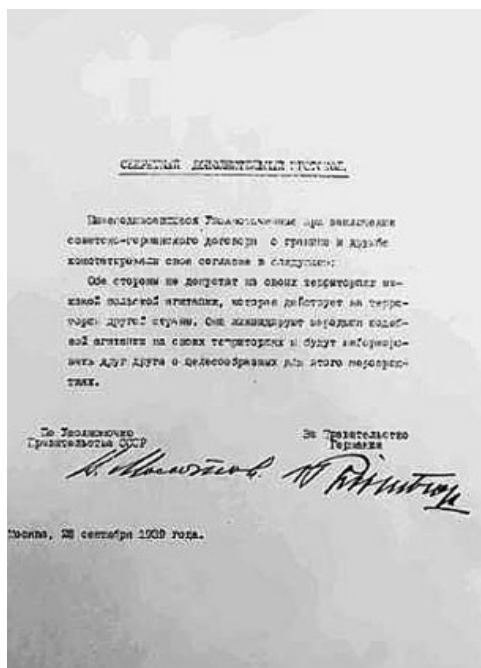
Germany did not know about the Katyn massacre until the corpses were found.[15]

Fourth Conference

The fourth and last meeting took place in March 1940 in Krakow[16] (according to some historians, it was part of the Zakopane Conference). This event was described by General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski, commander of Armia Krajowa in his book “Armia Podziemna” (“The Secret Army”). In it, he describes how a special delegation of NKVD came to Krakow, which was going to discuss with Gestapo how to act against the Polish resistance. The talks lasted for several weeks.[17][18] Bor-Komorowski’s description is disputed by Russian historian Oleg Vishlyov, who, based on the original Soviet documents, claims that the conference was not between NKVD and Gestapo, but between Soviet and German commissions dealing with refugees in both occupied territories and the topic of discussion was ‘refugee exchange’. According to that author the conference had nothing to do with repression against Poles or with the Katyn massacre. [19] In fact, some historians point out that, in spite of other coordinated actions, there is no evidence of direct German-Soviet cooperation in the Katyn massacre itself.[20]

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Secret protocol of German–Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty:

“Both parties will tolerate in their territories no Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party. They will suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose.” (Maybe just a tad counter-revolutionary, Stalinist Comrades?)

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